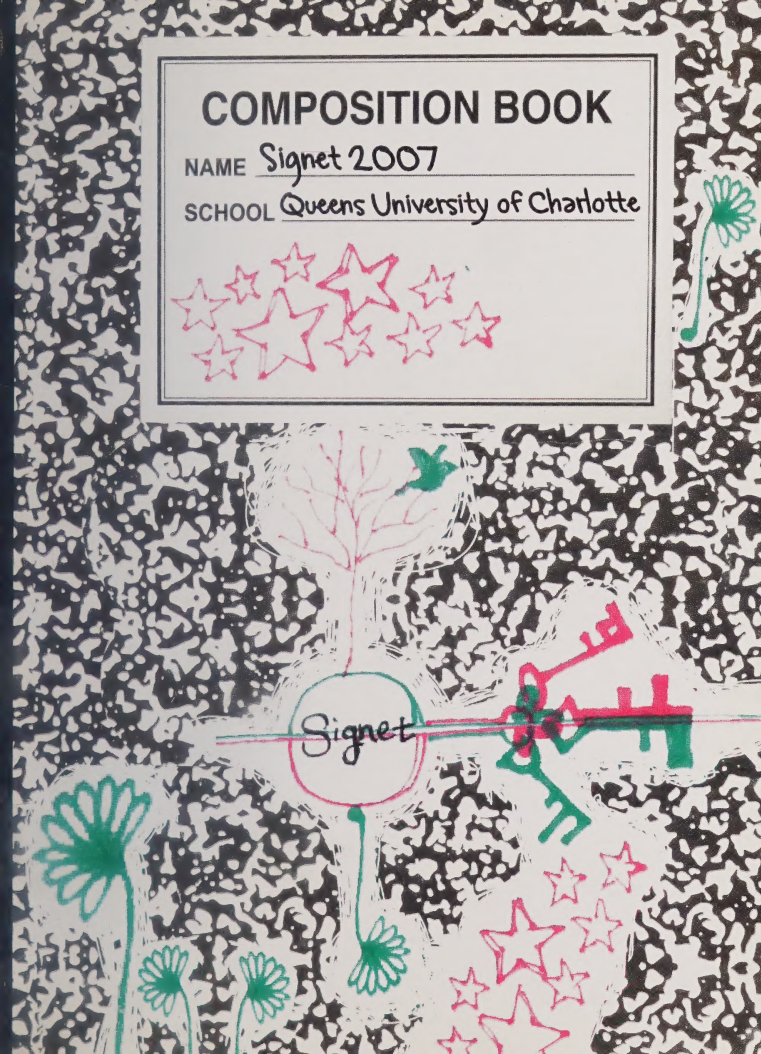
COMPOSITION BOOK
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Signet

Signet 2007

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Over the Atlantic

Karen Yutzy

Courage is hardly the absence of fear;
Courage is 4 AM - turbulence rising;
Courage is being terrified and walking headlong into the storm outside...
-63* Fahrenheit outside,
And I am more terrified of arriving than of drowning,
But we all shake onward,
These 200 destinies
Tied together only for a time...
A plane over the Atlantic
Always feels like it's falling,
But it could be rising,
Just like my courage,
It waxes and wanes...
But the moon outside my window,
It looks the same,
So who knows, maybe I'll be okay,
Courage may falter,
But pride will carry us onward,
Unable to admit the fear
That clutches...
The water waits below;
The unknown waits ahead;
To one or the other, I go.

Wild Strawberry

Jennifer S. Daniel

I didn't notice the hemangiomas right away
but instead focused how you lay, restless or still.
I could hold and care for you without panic –
even ignore your baby murmurs if I needed a minute.
But after I ran the cloth across your skin and I found the red
raised bumps on your shoulder, I felt the first burden of you.
The doctor said no need for concern; it's a birthmark
that will grow and change, first light then dark,
becoming mottled and pearly gray, only
to disappear by your second birthday.
When it fades, it will not mark your skin,
but the end of your infancy.
Now when I bathe you, I look
for the wild strawberry to see if I still have time.

Lawrence Welk

Olivia Munn

Zoom In
On an orange shag sofa with plastic covers
Leftover meatloaf on a stained china plate
Probably from the neighborhood annual yard sale
Where all the average people of the world
Pile their basement collections together
And blink away their mediocrity in dollar bills.
Action
He's getting high in his boxers
The plastic covers stick to his meaty legs
His ma went to bed two hours ago and now
Lawrence Welk wears his best host face and
Peers out at him on the couch
Trombones make him laugh
Baton twirlers make him laugh harder.
Close Up
See the slight asymmetry
His lazy left eye
The discoloration of his incisors
His mother's homemade haircut
Slow Motion
Dissect the nasality of his laugh
Frustration from pushing the same button
Twelve consecutive hours
The pulsing twitch in his eye socket
From wearing the same nametag

Since high school graduation
He's getting numb
His fingers are soft and pink
He's forgotten how to play guitar.
Zoom Out
Split-level houses
Breeding split-level people
Neighborhoods of acre-plots piled with stained china.

My Path

Ashleigh Jernigan

I travel not the beaten path,
But instead I blaze my own trail.
Plotting my own course
Along an untrodden road,
I make my own way
On a course no life but mine can call its own.

Alpha

Anna Norton

Language is a funny thing. We swim in it and through it (silver fish quick) not realizing
the tense geometry of lines and relations that make us require words like air. They create
that inner landscape of concepts; schema interlocking for abstractions that we try to
articulate with arbitrarily sounded syllables. They give us hate and love, pain, pleasure
and joy; yet they are because we create them of necessity. We need them as they need us:
To exist.

And yet, when we most require them they disappear into the murky-dark depths of our
psyches (That night, you lying dark and mysterious against your white sheets, your back
to me, and you asked "why" and again "why." That night, hunting for the right syllable to
contain an answer, then they slipped through the confusion, the waving mind-flotsam,
and into the depths.) In those hours when we desire most to contain ourselves neatly into
pools the tides come and sweep our words, our selves, away.

Prom Queen

Beth Devore

Last year's prom queen's
lavender dress against
her pale skin
makes her blue-green veins
stand out.
Hair lost to life-prolonging drugs
doesn't need an updo.
Sunken eyes draw
attention away
from the tubes
attached to the oxygen
tank next to her
wheelchair.
In one month,
the newspaper will read,
"19, died Monday
at home."
The crown trembles
in her hand,
from the bass or
fatigue,
as she places
it on this year's
queen.

Go Back to Sleep

Natalie Weiner

Oh, I'm sorry,
did the cries of the dying baby
who hasn't eaten for days
because its mother has died of AIDS
wake you from you peaceful slumber?

I apologize,
did the sight of children
digging through the piles of garbage
and eating your leftover yogurt
make you loose your appetite for McDonalds?

Pardon me,
did the makeup on that prostitute,
who is twelve years old
and does drugs to suppress her hunger pains,
cause your shoulders to shake with laughter, not tears?

My bad,
did I make you feel uncomfortable
showing you the way others live
hunched over wooden looms
making that rug in your living room?
My mistake,
I thought you might care.
Go back to sleep;
you're safe there.

New Shoes or the cult of consumerism

Laura Brekke

Shopping for new shoes,
I saw a delightful pair in leopard print
With a maroon bow,
That would look marvelous with nothing I own.

Indulged, I spent the fifty
For the shoes, and another hundred
buying the perfect outfit
To sport on a casual lunch date
at the Sunflower Café.

I imagine eating dates
And olives plumply stuffed with feta cheese,
Sipping glasses of Greek wine
When a festive poster caught my eye
From just around the corner to another shoe store.

The planet earth circled
With children holding hands and inciting me
To give up my chocolate cream pie money
So that some nameless ruffian
In Africa could learn to read.

I have never been to Africa,
But Rome is nice in early spring.
Walking past the poster I decided instead
To have a coffee latte with soy-milk
And feel good knowing it's fair trade.

The Treat of the Swan

Kamila Simmons

Bathed in pearls and love's blood
I'll bring you burning stars,
I'll bear fruits for your soul's devouring.
My heard, my life, my darling,
I ache like the pear trees.

Once you breathed life
back into me and now
I want you to taste my tender cake,
to hold my secrets and
we will watch the mornings fold in like whispers.

Press your face to mine
to the night
to blurry canvasses and fallen feathers
to withered lace and tears and ghosts of laughter

You must know by now –
it is me who is swanlike.
I am the one emerging from mermaids
and witches, stretching and throbbing
to see the light in my veins
to feel your dreams shaking in Technicolor
before my swollen eyes.

Playground Battle Wound

Beth Devore

I wanted to scream as my P.E. teacher taped gauze
over my bloody knee
(the first aid kit's bandaids weren't big enough this time).
I wanted to scream not out of pain
but for the worm Mrs. Steel had missed
when washing away the dirt and blood
(the worm I would later find was my mangled flesh,
caked in gravel and dirt).

No, Mom didn't need to come get me–
I was brave, I didn't cry, I'd be fine for the rest of the day.

My hands and book bag tried to hide
the blood-soaked bandages from the other kids on the bus.
I knew they saw and their stomachs churned
But not as much as mine would when I took a bath
and saw the forming scab turn grey like mold
Or after I brushed my dog
and had to pick the dog hair out of the ooze.

Maybe Ladonna had to write
"I will not push my classmates" fifty times.
But I won't remember her last name
twelve years after the sensation
of peeling stirrup pants away
from a sticky playground battle wound.

Dirty Vices

Liz Minei

I am an addict;
I don't inhale the tar;
I don't imbibe the whiskey;
I don't inject the heroine.

I am an addict and have cravings that no
Nicorette can ease,
AA can heal,
Or rehab can cure.

I am an addict of a different sort
I am your sister,
Your mother
Your maid of honor
Who refuses to acknowledge the screaming voices
Warring in my head begging for me to cease

I am the one who sits in the dark
Crying, rocking, hugging my knees
Feeling dirty
Choking on imaginary vomit
As I stare at the empty frosting can
And clutch the cold spoon
Because I did it again, this one last time

Feeling ill and abused,
By my own hand, my lack of control, my dirty vices

Mustard Seed

Jennifer S. Daniel

Opening the lid to the yellow make-up
case, I smell a mix of Pond's and Noxzema.
Emory boards, fingernail clippers
and cotton balls float in the bottom.
Lifting a white ball, I touch it to my cheek
- breathe in - then imagine it's your finger.

Buried beneath there is a silver chain
and I rescue it from the sea of white.
Anchored on it is a marble-sized,
glass ball holding a mustard seed.
The ornament is small, but heavy
in my hand as I turn it to study the seed.

You wore this necklace to remind
yourself that big things start out small.
Remembering Buddha's advice to
the grieving mother, I remember
that sometimes small things tarts
out big and hope that my grief
will shrink to be like this seed.

The briefest of moments

Karen Yutzy

Laugh before you cry,
And live before you die,
Because we're only given the briefest of moments
To make our mark,
To laugh a little, to love a little,
To live, a lot...
Because living is not as easy as it may first appear,
And the girl I was
Wouldn't even recognize
The woman I've become,
But I'm slowly accepting that.

It's hardest to live up to our own expectations.
Growing up is full of pain.
Two days, I blinked my eyes,
And everything had changed...
Morning came, and I could never go back
To the girl who had gone to bed,
And we all have days like that,
Days we'd rather forget...
But we hold our heads up high,
Full of pride,
Hide our secret pain deep inside...
Being a woman means being closed,
Hurting in private, politely...
No more tantrums in the middle of the grocery store floor

While our mother looks on, impatiently…
Being a woman may be having nervous breakdowns,
But always alone, always quietly.

Physiology

Anna Norton

years from now, I won't remember
your eyes, the intricacies of skin and bone
(curving round shoulders that fit perfectly
in my flutter-touching palm) or your
new haircut, new shirt, new glasses,
or the tone of your I said – you said voice.

what I'll remember is how it felt
to curl comma close and sleep warmed,
our bodies S curved into a maze of
limbs and angles (weighing us down,
reminding us we haven't yet drifted
completely away) and the
careful meter of your breath, your
Heart in my arms.

Marjorie

Olivia Munn

Borne forth by swinging mahogany and glass
leaving a bemused suit-and-tie in her wake
and Johnson, Johnson, and Morris with a stack of traffic tickets
that I'm sure smelled strangely like gardenias
She arrived on the curb in a green pea-coat.

Carelessly holding a taxi with her left hand
and a Virginia Slim in her right
She flicked it to the sopping ground
and crushed it with her size ten second-hands.
I thought, how redundant.

Would one of you dears share with me?
She said it to the air, to the old black woman on the bench
and the university student with his coins
but her eyes said it to me.
Where are you headed?
I hugged myself as the cold turned my question into smoke.

She patted her hands together in rapid succession
Questions were complete entities to her and
Answers were another thing altogether
Oh, you're such a doll.
Her long freckled arms worked magic around me
Something must have spilled from her sleeves
Something classic like fairy dust or butterflies

Because soon they had me in backseat sanctuary
Shoved me in like a reluctant magnet
Folded up in heirlooms and fur.

Yes, but where are you headed?
Though I was there already,
worrying about my clothes getting wrinkled
sitting in the comfortable dirt of transportation
Oh silly, what does that matter?

The green creature beside me had
a collection of (live) earthworms
a terrible cold that had lasted for two weeks
a tendency to crash into doors
a craving for tea uptown
her grandmother's name
a general disliking of police officers
And would I like to come?
Come where?
To tea uptown.
I kept thinking of the fortune lady that had
read the wrinkles in my palm the day before
She said I wouldn't marry John
I think she was right.

the book is a diversion
from Shakespeare.
Baleen smiles make me feel
young, and blubber
still makes me giggle.
I can't remember

the role of the ancient Greek chorus,
but a newborn orca weights 180 kg.
My twenty-two-year-old fingers
on the home keys wonder
what would have come
if I knew now what I knew then.

Beached Dreams

Beth Devore

The slick book jacket
sticks to my legs
as my eight-year-old brain collects
tail spans and calf weights.
Dorsal fins slice
through the pages
of arctic waters.
Meals of seal pups and krill
fill the hungry covers.
I will be a marine biologist
and work for National Geographic
taking pictures of right whales
and writing the stories, too.
Mom won't let me miss school
to see the beached whale.
Maybe Sea World is the closest
I will ever get. My beginning
cursive captures dreams in words.

I will be an editor
for the business section
of an important newspaper
and I will sit behind stacks of paper
that should have been recycled
three months ago.
With tattered pages, a ripped jacket
the book is a diversion
from Shakespeare.
Baleen smiles make me feel
young, and blubber
still makes me giggle.
I can't remember
the role of the ancient Greek chorus,
but a newborn orca weighs 180 kg.
My twenty-two-year-old fingers
on the home keys wonder
what would have come
if I knew now what I knew then.

Shadow

Mel Campos

I'm standing here beside you
    you don't see
Try to follow me into a crowd
    lost in the multitude of bodies

Plain features are often swept aside
The silence that surrounds me
    also shields me
A lifestyle in the shadow.

And suddenly I'm forced out
The stage is high
The hot spotlight bears illumination
    accentuating overlooked features
A thousand pairs of eyes
    bore through my being
This crowd is here to see.

Taking a deep breath
Thoughts become actions
 Actions become a song
Bearing my sheltered soul
Letting the shadow disappear.

11.

Lesley Albers

Just like the men at the gas station stare
too hard and too long as you walk
by (like the world has stopped and you
are the only thing still moving, moving, moving
and passing through the streets and by the buildings
and dirty old men), young boys stand at attention,
pressing filthy hands and runny noses up against
the smudged cracked glass to gape at the spinning
world outside.

You are moving, moving, moving,
and now the snow starts to swirl around you
and gently melts on your warm tongue (it's blue, still,
from a blow-pop hurriedly sucked before class even though
you left school warmed by the sun and now the street lamps
shine iridescent), as, cutting through the cold gloam and inhaling deeply, you pass the gas station, hugging your coat tighter,
tighter, tighter, breathing into the cold.

Without meaning to we became more than we ought
and in doing so wanted to take on the world by
never dying (death is for the weak, you said,
and so we vowed to never stop and never be anything
less than everything), but in time all
good keeps moving closer, closer, closer,
to death, and the end of time, and us,
and freedom.

Mom and Me

Natalie Weiner

Right turns turn into lefts as the sound of our voices drown out the radio.
Exit 44 comes up before we notice we missed our exit 8 miles back.
ETAs change from 3:30 to 4, but I wouldn't trade in a second
For destinations will wait, while our time together will not.

In today's fast paced world, I'm glad we can still lock in some quality time:
Just roll up the windows and fly through both towns and conversation topics alike.
We may have as many pit stops and awkward pauses as we feel fit
For we know not all roads we take will be smooth,
But that each one is worth the taking

While our seats might not move closer together through the course of our journey
I am sure that our hearts do,
And that is worth way more than the extra 30 minutes

A bit unrealistic

Karen Yutzy

Reality, I'm finding, always feels a bit unrealistic.
Reality, perhaps, can only be found in elaborate pretending.
Maybe this is the curse of the modern world,
Real things can only be found on the silver screen,
Between the covers of a book.
Life has to be filtered, fictionalized,
Before it can be convincing,
Before it feels real...
We separate ourselves from the monotony of the day to day
With little sensational anecdotes,
Hoping no one notices the embellishment,
'Cause life's just more fun this way.
The line between fiction and nonfiction is thin,
And we all cross over, back and forth,
Finding truth in fiction,
Solace in a world of dreams,
That feels real,
Smells real, looks real,
And we all escape from reality,
Hating the fake feeling it brings.
So we all wear our masks,

And just pretend our lives away.

C'est Qoui Ca?

Kathryn Linn

I baked you like a cake
Licking sticky batter
From my fingers
Inhaling the vanilla sweetness
Of the expectant icing
Which mingled with lavender
Air freshener. I could taste
The flower petals
Melting purple in my mouth.
You never were as delicate or delectable
As my cake.

You were a walking clusterfuck
So drunk on a daily basis
That you fell down the stairs
(plusiers fois)
And told the customers
At your coffee shop
That your girlfriend beat you
Up in a crazy S & M mania.
One plus one equals
(dans ta tête)
The square root of three
Times twenty-five.

Navy coffee isn't meek,

But I am, and I wonder
If you notice and adore
The precision of my punctuation
In text messages.

Kitkat's nervous laugh clangs
In my brain like the pots and pans
Banging around my mother's kitchen.
Mother Mary sailed too far from shore
And fell off the edge of the world.
She floats in outer space now,
Knitting with the meteors
And taking tea with Pluto.

Kitkat laughs me back to the front porch
Snapping the umbilical cord
Pulling me past the brink
Of the solar system.

I will have my cake and eat you, too.
You are a delicate sin,
But I am determined that you will suffer
The consequences of your folly.

The cake cried vanilla tears
Which dribbled slowly
Down the cupboards
To kiss the kitchen floor.

III. (Gray Roundel)

Lesley Albers

Slamming your car into a tree and wrapping
your arms around it in a grotesque hug that grafted
skin to bark forever

you made headlines.
The pictures couldn't show your unease as
your arms wrapped and grafted
skin to bark: forever,

but we remember because now we will never see you old and gray,
(forgetting names and laughing in dark rooms, intoxicated and uninhibited by age) only ever
slamming your car...
your arms...
skin to bark forever.

Conversation

Laura Brekke

There is nothing like a good conversation
and lately we've been having nothing like good conversation.
Especially when I watch the rain droplets careen down the glass pane to chaotic deaths on the
cement walk outside my flat
where I'm holed up inside a Red Royal phone booth.
It rains often in Northern Ireland,
where the grass is always green no matter which side you stand on
and the flowers are bigger than my two fists balled together
(although you always said I had little hands).

You keep telling me you love me
(which I know and am convinced of)
but I want to know how your mother is and if you've found an apartment.
I want to tell you about the red lark I saw on a hedge by the rubbish bin or
the newspaper article about a body found in a bog just 3 miles from my flat.

I long to discuss the position of a democratic revolution that could happen
if a woman wins the presidency in France,
or tell you about the murals that majestically chronicle the violence in Londonberry
(called Derry by locals).
But instead I watch a spider walk her spindly path in the corner while you remind me that I miss you.

ix.

Lesley Albers

Leaving a year behind as the crash of the phone cut
through the silence of the house and the bottles of pills sat
collecting dust and screaming to be taken, screaming like you had
when you pushed the baby out, dead and blue, in the front yard of the house,
screaming as if nothing could ever stop the pain (because nothing,
it seems, ever could or ever had), we shut the door behind us after pulling
the cord from the wall and smashing the receiver on the floor.

Driving seemed endless as the road poured out in front of us
and the radio played songs that only served to remind us of courting
and fucking and a hot mattress that I stained numerous times even amid
your laughing cries not to, to leave it in just once, because it wouldn't matter
just one time, but it had, and later you pushed out that blue anger
while I watched from a distance, because any show of emotion would have made it
OK, and it was anything but,

and I kept driving without ever wanting to stop. Nothing but silence

between us and road ahead, our house and that sad grave
getting smaller behind.

Umbrella

Kamila Simmons

That morning after you left,
the rain snapped its bones
on glass.
Elixir, heavy with whispers
pulled my eyelids shut like swollen oysters,
gave me drams of the flat pearl
that sleeps beneath the skin:
frayed silk blooming wet sanguine.
Inside there were echoes of shaking speech stopped.
A lost orphan,
I absently clutched cold pillows that I mistook for suitcases.
And all the while my wind-up toy heart
opened and closed like mad wooden shutters.

Confessions from the Suitemate

Liz Minei

I'm sorry that the bathroom smells like tuna fish
The kitchen is so far away, like all the way down the hall
Dumping the tuna water down the sink is the next best alternative

I'm sorry that I spilled the fancy shower gel you bought down the drain
Actually, I'm sorry that I spilled my cheap soap down the drain and filled my bottle up
With your fancy stuff

I apologize for leaving puddles on the bathroom floor
And sweeping the hair under the rug
I would have vacuumed, but I didn't feel like fishing out the cord

It's a very sad thing that your best dress got that stain on it.
I can't imagine where it came from
Or at least I wouldn't if I hadn't been the one holding the juice box (that one time)

I'm sorry I forgot that it was my week to clean the toilet,
Okay, so I forgot for the whole semester
But at least I changed the toilet paper roll once, right?

I know I am a lousy suitemate 'cause I eat your raisins

And borrow your toothpaste without giving it back
And leave little hairballs on the wall in the shower
And use your comb to brush my dog (that was one time by the way)

But if I wasn't here, there'd be nobody to make sure your detergent smelled nice
Or your gum still had its flavor
Or your magazines were worth reading

Right?

Ceases Completely

Justin Barker

She folds the letter with slightly aged hands–
the same hands that bore
from their fingertips Clarissa, Mrs. Ramsay, Orlando
now expel "Leonard" on ivory paper;
her final prolific work that now watches
from the mantle, as she escapes into the garden.

Dressed in an oversized winter housecoat
with pockets made for dusting rags and polish,
she shuffles past a young woman,
envious of her indifference; there the voices
catch up with her, inciting a terrible
clamor inside her head.

On all sides the trees berate her with anathemas,
as she stumbles through the labyrinth of their arms
onto the soggy, weed infested bank of the River Ouse,
She commences her quest for stones
to deliver her to the river--
to erase her scent from the pursuing voices.

Pockets now laden with thousand pound saviors,
She permits the river to indulge in her body,
taking her into its frigid, mud mongering embrace.
As she assimilates into the current,
her hand writes death into the river bed, and the gray

water exorcises the tormentors from her body.
She waits in the silence of the water
suspended by the puce weeds; through the screen of death
at the clouds invading the sky.
A smile adorns the abnormal flesh of her face,
as she waits for the living to discover her.

Moonchild

Kamila Simmons

The television laughs, spitting up
acid colors
and the little girl (strawberry-blonde,
like teary bronchitis medicine
forced down her throat so often)
tugs at her bathing suit
that is a sky, sparkling cobalt.
The hotel floor, pink (her favorite color, like fresh meat
or Barbie's party dress)
and coarse,
lies dead beneath her.
Outside, there is the shore
(she knows it is her real home, no matter what
Mother and that schoolteacher
with the eggplant body and papery smile says).

Never mind her baby skin, that bakes
like a very small cake,
or that her hands are too soft
and the sea shells always cut them
(maybe it isn't her hands at all, perhaps
the sea shells are resentful).

She loves the sun's fever kiss,
the way the waves pull at her;
She wants to crawl in with the mermaids

(someday, she will lock herself
in loveless bathrooms and try to remember
where exactly she belongs:
the slick knives of sand, milky corpses,
and the ocean's incessant wrenching).

Growing Down

Carissa Orlando

People my age should be growing up
(it's a rumor I hear around town).
Instead of growing up, as I hear I should be
I believe I've begun growing down.
I don't speak with authority, I don't act my age,
I can't handle conflicting emotion,
I don't understand how to perform complex tasks,
Like monogamy, conflict, or devotion.
I shit where I eat and I bite when I'm fed,
I fall in more love every day.
I haven't grown up, so I must have grown down;
I don't think there's any other way.

Scar

Jennifer S. Daniel

Beneath the hump on your chest,
where the surgeon cracked your
breastbone as if it were the ghost
of a wishbone from a Sunday
roast chicken, lurked

dangerous holes that filled
your baby lungs with blood,
not rich in oxygen, not red
like your Fisher-Price fire engine,
but strangely purplish and an aorta

less than half the size
of one of those straws
we might have used to stir
weak coffee as we sat
in the mauve waiting room,

since there's nothing left
to do while the doctors
mar your skin, because you
suffered my first failure
as a mother when your placenta

attached too low
so that one day you would be

required to bear a scar
given to you on the operating
table by a surgeon who held

his breath waiting for your heart
to resume and turn your skin
from gray to that milky-peach,
complimenting that saving scar
which dissects your once perfect torso.

Wallflower

Kathryn Linn

My bedroom is a garden –
It has no walls and is filled with lilies.
My bedroom reeks of sunshine
And tastes like freedom.
My bedroom is a cavity among pearly.

Grapes are hippie candy
And berries make my tongue glisten.
If one plus one equals two,
Then Marietta and Athens are in love,
But one plus one is roughly congruent
to three-and-a-half, and Marietta is unrequited.

The whiney moon of ecstasy
Rings my fingers
And fondles my pulse like euphoria.
My tête est folle.

Cupcake wants her sprinkles,
But mama locked them away
In the cabinet with the aspirin and gin.

The sun spat glaring beams
Through the kitchen curtains,
And the linoleum reflected
A spotlight onto the refrigerator door.

My room will crumble into ashes
At archaic words spoken in broken
English by the lady down the hall,
But not before the windows suck
New prey form the jaws of squirrels and blue jays.

My bedroom is always hungry.
The walls drip tulip promises
And beg for one more day.

How Are You Today?

Carissa Orlando

happy
ecstatic
jubilant
so
fucking
crazy
insane
out of my mind
out of my head
out of everything
so
completely
lost
careening
tumbling
soaring
running
jumping
dancing
crazy
so
fucking
CRAZY
out of my mind
lost
found

indulging
counting
bruises
ACTUAL BRUISES
lots of them
no pain
a good pain
a pain that makes me thrill
makes me ecstatic
makes me
so
fucking
CRAZY
laughing
rejoicing
singing
hymns
songs
praises
to
nothing
to
anything
to
EVERYTHING
to
you
to
me
to

the
CRAZY
the
ABSOLUTE
FUCKING
CRAZY
the singing
the dancing
the amazing
overwhelming
happiness
smiling
laughing
jumping
soaring
floating
flying
flying
flying
flying
flying
flying
flying
dear god don't let me hit a wall.

That Look in Your Eyes

Beth Devore

You've picked a difficult career for someone with your personality. Reserved people usually have trouble selling fake crap to people, but something in your eyes says you'll be a success. You'll make grandmas in purple, terry-cloth bathrobes and pink curlers believe they need everlasting deodorant and antiperspirant. Because of you, the world will believe one swipe of your rain fresh solid will banish their perspiration woes for life.

Remember, you must not steal fake legs or glass eyes; this has been done before, and people will know you are a con-man. To be trustworthy, work on your voice. That high-pitched whine will have you living on the streets in no time. A more confident, sultry voice is what you need. Your wardrobe needs help, too. Flannel shirts and dirty sweat pants couldn't sell the cure for cancer. Watch the local news for your fashion dos and don'ts. The news anchors are the don'ts–they try too hard thinking they'll get a big break. Follow the weathermen. Weathermen know they'll be with the local news for life, but the public sees them as celebrities. Everyone trusts a weatherman. You'll want the same cheap suits and ugly ties. Finding the right car is important. A beat-up pickup screams, "Pity me" and a fancy sport utility says, "This is just a hobby." What you need is a sedan, perhaps a Chevrolet, in a neutral color–no reds or yellows.

Forgetting the past will be the most difficult obstacle for you. You will want to remember the Golden Rule and every-

thing else your mother taught you, but you must forget. If you're that concerned about doing unto others as they'd do unto you, just think about all of the Trefoils you bought from Girl Scouts; those innocent, little girls conned you into thinking shortbread counted as a cookie. Forget that your father taught you to hold doors open for women, too. Politeness is overrated. Women will be your chief customers as their desire to smell good and attract the opposite sex dispels their reason. This is especially true of rich women. You'll have no trouble selling to rich women if you tell them someone in their tennis club secretly bought some last week. Emphasize how well it works under those fur coats. Stay-at-home moms are easy targets, too. They'll buy one of the .5-oz packages for everyone in the family if you tell them how much easier the teen years are without body odor. And don't forget about the high school gym teachers. Anyone who spends their days in an un-air conditioned room full of eighteen-year-old boys will buy in bulk for stocking the locker room. The crush you had on your high school gym teacher does not obligate you to telling all gym teachers the truth.

A good place to practice your selling skills is the laundry mat. Find someone folding her clothes and set your clean laundry down on the same table. Start with some small talk – this may be something you'll have to practice in front of the mirror beforehand; you aren't very articulate. Tell her how much you hate it when your kids leave gum in their pockets or about the new detergent and fabric softener combo you found (just don't mention how much you love the commercial with the little bear, it will ruin your credibility). Once she's talking freely, bring up the sweat stains on the shirt she's folding. Everyone

is embarrassed by the yellow underarms on their white shirts, and she will be glad you know the solution to the problem. If you even think of coming on to her, you're fired; lewd comments lead to lawsuits, not successful conning.

Look through the newspapers for support group meetings. Overeaters Anonymous is a good one to attend. Fat people sweat a lot. Their low self-esteem guarantees that you will sell many bottles. They'll probably buy some for their in-denial friends, too. Befriending them is necessary, so please refrain from calling anyone "Tubby" or "Porky." Insecure people need to know they can trust you. Don't get too attached to anyone, though. After you distribute the deodorant, you can never return to the meeting. Before mentioning the product, you'll have to attend several meetings and go out with people afterwards. Once they believe you are friends, break down and cry. Tell them about the experience that made you realize you needed help controlling your eating. You know the one I mean. The time when you were 150 pounds overweight and sweated when you got nervous. The time you were going to propose to your girlfriend, but the sweat kept coming until you looked like a NFL coach who just had the Gatorade cooler dumped over him. She left you at the table before the appetizers came. Even joining Overeaters Anonymous didn't solve all your problems, though. You had a thirty-two-inch waist, but you also had the body odor of a workhorse. That's when you saw the infomercial for everlasting deodorant and antiperspirant and were cured for life. Awestruck, your new friends will beg you to tell them where they can find this wonder. Tell them to bring $300 cash to the next meeting, and you will bring the goods. Make sure they know $300 is cheaper than the eight easy

installments of $39.95 (+ shipping and handling) you paid for the deodorant.

Nicotine Anonymous is another good meeting to crash. Smokers aren't as hard to convince; you won't need the sob story for these people. As long as you carry some nicotine patches around, everyone will believe you're a smoker and you'll bond immediately. Just don't forget that you started smoking when you were thirteen because the commercials made it look sexy. Smokers know they're unattractive with their yellow teeth and brittle fingernails; they can't afford to have body odor, too. Make sure your everlasting deodorant falls out of your bag when you're digging for your keys at the end of the meeting. Your self-conscious friends will pick it up, and knowing that if they can't quit smoking they should at least smell good, will ask you where they, too, can get everlasting deodorant. Don't pinch your nose to avoid their bad breath, though—you can't risk offending them.

When you tire of spending your evenings with gluttons and Marlboro men, try something more uplifting, such as a church revival. Southern Baptists might have a reputation of fire and brimstone but compared to your support group cronies they know how to have a good time. You can't find anything more jovial than a room full of people waving their arms in the air as they sing "Amazing Grace." All of that showcasing of armpits calls for everlasting deodorant. You may feel guilty about conning people in God's house, but you're just helping them to prepare for the afterlife. The last thing someone wants to hear on Judgment Day is that he can't pass through those pearly gates on account of a stinky underarm. You can't let them see your "I love Mary" keychain, though. If they know you're

Catholic, they'll think you're selling Satan's potion. It's not acceptable to tell them that their pastor's vigor makes you think he's possessed. Your job is to con, not condemn.

After a successful mission with the righteous, you'll be eligible for a promotion. Instead of remaining a local con artist, you'll have the chance to widen your circle of influence. Travel down to the Peach State where people want to smell sweet as they sit on front porches drinking lemonade. In Texas, women want their cowboys without the stench of manure. Floridians like sun-bronzed beauties, but not sweat-soaked beach towels. You won't make it to West Virginia; they have bigger problems than excessive perspiration. You might become too big for the deodorant market. If that's the case, you'll move on to bathing suits that eliminate tan lines or diet pills that make men look like Brad Pitt. The possibilities are endless.

Because you'll have to demonstrate the product, it's only fair you know the risks. For reasons beyond scientific explanation, diarrhea is a side effect of using everlasting deodorant and antiperspirant. You will receive a potty chair, heavy duty bags, and an air freshener to keep in your car in case of emergencies. Make sure you alternate arms for each demonstration. Something in the deodorant eats away at your skin and makes the layers peel away. You won't have any problems if you do a single swipe and change arms each time. There's also a possibility of twelve years in jail, but only if you are caught.

With that said, here's your briefcase full of everlasting deodorant and antiperspirant. When you've sold the entire supply, drop the briefcase with the money into the dumpster behind the post office on Second Avenue. You can pick up

your commission check and restocked briefcase the next morning from Frank at the pizzeria on Florida Street. Any questions?

No, you can't sell to blind children. That's unethical.

Jeremy Carlson

Jeremy Carlson

Jeremy Carlson

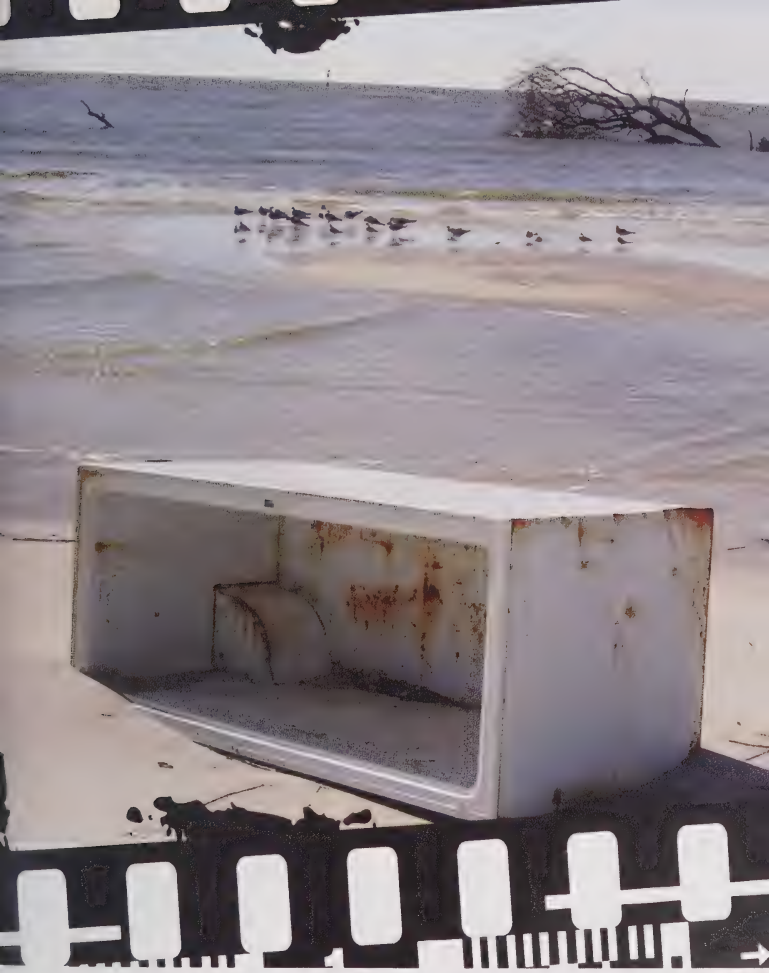
Jeremy Carlson

Jeremy Carlson

Jeremy Carlson

Kate Jetton

Kate Jetton



Kate Jetton

Kate Jetton

Kate Jetton

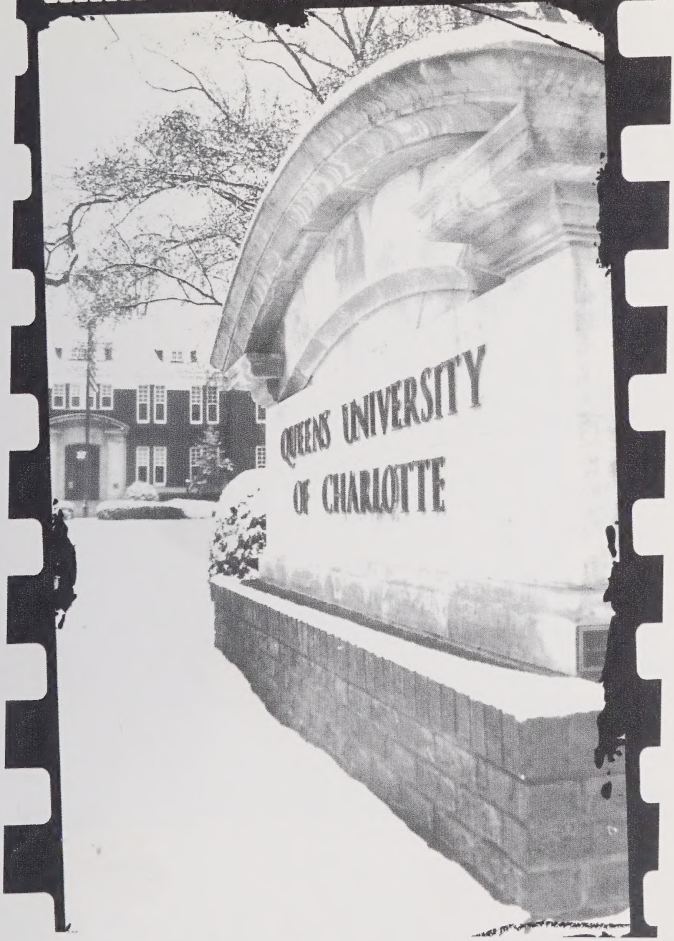
Kate Jetton

Liz Minei

Liz Minei

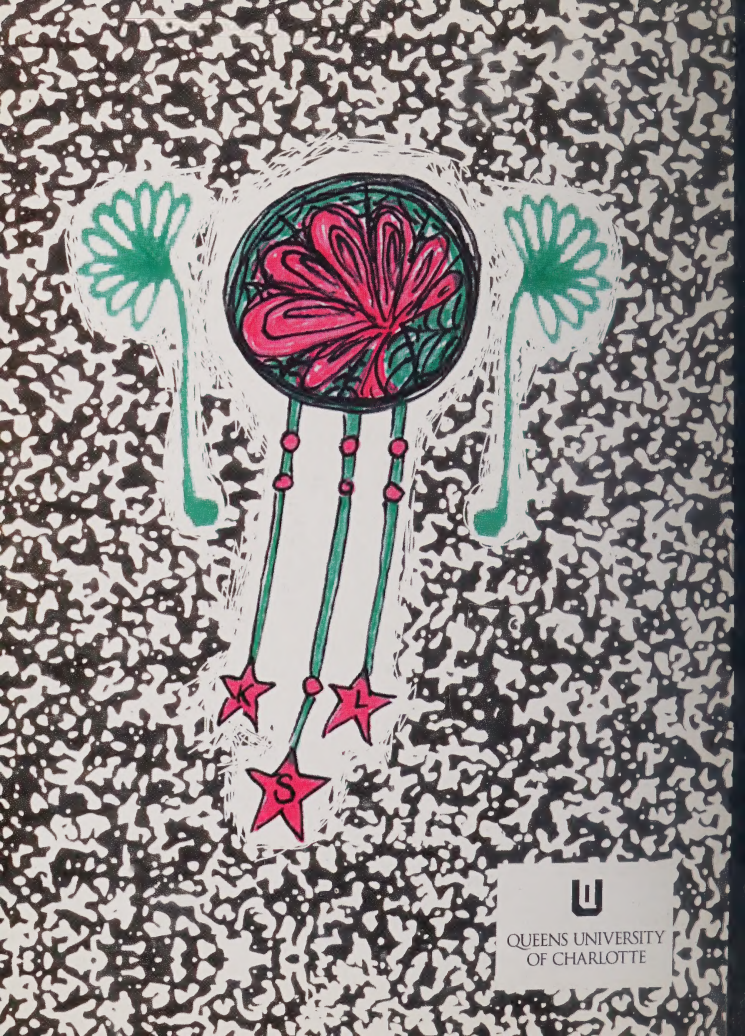
Liz Minei

Chris Riehn



Chris Riehn

Laura Brekke + Lesley Albers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